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## NBC Challenges CIA On Tape Destruction

NEW YORK (AP) — NBC News has reported that the Central Intelligence Agency destroyed tapes made following the Watergate break-in affair after Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield asked that any Watergate evidence be saved.

NBC said the CIA denies deliberate destruction of any Watergate evidence. But the CIA tapes were destroyed Jan. 18, 1973, the day after the CIA acknowledged receipt of a letter from Mansfield to various agencies asking that any Watergate materials be saved, NBC said last night.

CIA Director William E. Colby said Tuesday the intelligence agency had destroyed all but one of its tape recordings made during the Watergate affair.

However, Colby said the destruction of the tapes was a routine matter. "There was nothing deliberate about this in the sense of destroying a damaging tape or anything like that."

NBC said it was told by a CIA spokesman that Mansfield's letter arrived Jan. 22 —four days too late.

"Nevertheless, by checking Senate Mansfield's office, we were able to find a receipt for the letter signed by the CIA on the 17th, the day before the tapes' destruction," said NBC correspondent Carl Stern.

"Informed of that, the CIA withdrew its earlier statements and now says only that it will try diligently to pin down what happened," Stern reported.

NBC said the destroyed CIA tapes were recorded in the month following the Watergate break-in and involved then CIA Director Richard Helms, his deputy Vernon Walters, acting FBI Director Patrick L. Gray, former White House domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman, ex-White House counsel John W. Dean III, "and possibly even the President."